



Gate City Immigrant Initiative

April 26, 2017

9:00AM – 10:30AM

Nashua City Hall Auditorium

Gate City Immigrant Initiative is a subcommittee of the Nashua Cultural Connections Committee.

Present: Jacqueline Aguilar, Pedro Altagracia, Pastor Richard Cullen, Katelyn Gagnon, Sylvia Gale, Samba Halkose, Mark Hastbacka, Adelina Hernandez, Donna Marceau, Aseeb Niazi, Shayana Owen, Yoly Rivero-Lara, Jason Wakefield, Shirley Woodward, Sam Cooper-Wall, Molly Short Carr, Lauren Osowski (co-chair)

Commenced at 9:00am

1. Call to Order/Introductions

2. Co-Chair updates

- Lauren shared that the Adult Learning Center would like to host an event again this year for World Refugee Day on Tuesday, June 20. The group will help with planning the event. The group thought that 11:00am would be a good time to hold the event. Pedro suggested that the group work to identify the refugee communities of Nashua to make sure that each group is represented on that day. Sylvia said that the most compelling discussion last year came out of people sharing personal stories, so we will have more of that this year. Lauren will make a flyer for the event and work with Pedro to make sure the mayor can attend. She will work on recruiting refugee participants and gathering flags and decorations.
- Lauren shared an update on the Fall Symposium, which will take place at Rivier on October 13. She gave a small bio of the keynote speakers. She asked the group for a recommendation for a counselor to have on hand for those dealing with powerful emotions that day. The group recommended contacting Susan Mead at Greater Nashua Mental Health or a trauma counselor from Bridges. Lauren will reach out to Susan.
- Lauren asked for help with a subtitle for the event. Some suggestions were “Building a Healthy Community” or “Health and Healing for All”. The group spoke about making sure that the focus was clear from the title so the event didn’t sound like a public health event, which have a very different focus. There was a discussion about including the word “healing”, using a holistic approach, celebrating our differences, and focusing on the specialized needs of the population. No final decision was made, so Lauren will discuss it further with Jenn.
- Lauren shared that The Welcoming Walk, a celebration of the history of immigration in Nashua has been postponed until fall. Pedro added that there was difficulty in scheduling the event at a

time that would not conflict with other events and when the trollies are available. Lauren and Pedro will keep the group updated with more information as plans progress for the fall.

- Lauren asked the group if they would like to open our meeting time to another presentation. Two suggestions were to bring back the refugee resettlement organizations to discuss the resettlement process and to have a presentation about the role of city departments play in helping refugees get settled. These might make a good joint presentation, so Lauren will work with Molly and Shirley on this for a future meeting. It would be good to show people who want to help refugees what types of services are available once the resettlement agencies step back. Also, these would be the same services offered to all Nashua residents, so it would be good information for a variety of service providers and volunteers.

3. Cultural Navigators update

- Adelina shared that they are still looking for new Navigators. Galina will be doing the training in a few weeks. We will send the application again to the group. Completed applications should be sent to Adelina. Questions can also be directed to her.

4. Resettlement Agency update

- Ascentria – Shirley discussed how the overall decrease in refugees for the USA (from 110,000 to 50,000) has impacted their agency. They have had layoffs and are waiting to see what happens as the executive orders work their way through the court system. In April, they resettled 7 Congolese people to Concord. No arrivals came to Nashua.
- International Institute – Katelyn introduced Molly, who is the new Program Director. Molly explained that she will be handling all program related information and Amadou will now be the Community Relations Director focusing on fundraising and other external things related to the organization. They have maintained their staff and are adding an office manager as they reorganize to focus more on serving refugees who have been here for longer. They have 4 Burmese people coming to Nashua in May. In the future, only cases with US ties will be resettled in Nashua.

5. Member updates

- Samba mentioned the Job Fair that the Adult Learning Center is hosting, in cooperation with Congresswoman Kuster's office, on May 11 (6:30-8:00pm) and May 12 (10:30am-1:00pm). The flyer will be sent with the minutes.
- Pedro discussed the ACLU "Know Your Rights" workshop that had been mentioned previously. He is in communication with them and they are putting materials together. He is working with the Cultural Connections Committee to organize the workshop here in Nashua. There is also a "train the trainer" event in Concord on May 4.
- Sylvia mentioned an event on May 1 from 5:00 to 7:00pm in Veterans' Park in Manchester. It is a rally for immigrant justice.
- The International Institute is holding a series of events with Suitcase Stories where immigrants and refugees will share their stories. The next event is in Arlington on May 7. There is also an event in Lowell on June 1. There will be one in Manchester in September and they are looking for storytellers. There is more information on the International Institute website.
- Sam Cooper-Wall will be the new contact for Congresswoman Kuster's office. Aseeb Niazi will be leaving at the end of the week for a position with the State Department.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, May 24, 2017 – 9:00 AM-10:30 AM at Nashua City Hall Auditorium